

## REFERENCES

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25. FOOD HABITS OF THE COMMON RAT-SNAKE *PTYAS MUCOSUS* LINN.

The dhaman or common rat-snake *Ptyas mucosus* Linn. is widely distributed in India. It is diurnal and commonly seen close to human habitation. Recorded food items are geckos, toads, frogs, young pond turtles, nestling birds, skinks, agamid lizards, bats and snakes (Daniel 1983).

On the way to Sariska Tiger Reserve from Delhi in November 1990, we found a rat-snake run over by a vehicle, close to Firozpur (Haryana). Head to tail tip length and body weight were 202 cm and 1500 g respectively. Whitaker (*JBNHS* 66(1): 185-186) reported that adults

averaged 180 to 210 cm in length with a maximum of 250 cm from a locality near Bombay. Daniel (THE BOOK OF INDIAN REPTILES, 1983) reports that most adult specimens are between 165 cm and 200 cm with a maximum of 352 cm. Examination of stomach contents revealed that the snake had swallowed two chicks of the blue-rock pigeon *Columba livia* weighing 43.3 and 49.0 gms and one soft-furred field rat *Rattus meltdada* Gray weighing 55.5 gms, equivalent to 10% of the snake's body weight (Table 1).

December 7, 1990

S.P. GOYAL

TABLE I  
FOOD ITEMS OF RAT-SNAKE *Ptyas mucosus*

Food items	Characteristics
1. Two chicks of blue-rock pigeon <i>Columba livia</i>	Weight: 43.3 g and 49.0 g
2. Soft-furred field rat <i>Rattus meltdada</i>	Weight: 55.5 g, male. External body measurements: Head and body: 129 mm, tail: 104 mm ear 21 mm, hind foot: 24 mm.

26. RANGE EXTENSION OF DUMERIL'S BLACKHEADED SNAKE  
*SIBYNOPHIS SUBPUNCTATUS* (DUM. & BIBR.)

On 15 March 1987, at Point Calimere, Thanjavur district, Tamil Nadu, a southern crow-pheasant *Centropus sinensis parroti* was noticed carrying a snake. Accidentally the snake slipped out of the crow-pheasant's beak and we collected it before it was picked up by the bird. The snake was later measured and identified as Dumeril's blackheaded snake *Sibynophis subpunctatus*. The snake was 40 cm in length. In current literature the distribution

is given as south-west, central and north-east India (COMMON INDIAN SNAKES, Whitaker, R. 1978). This record indicates that its distribution ranges up to south-east India.

We are thankful to A. Gnanasekar of the Bombay Natural History Society, for his help in identifying the snake.

May 6, 1990

V. NATARAJAN  
S. ALAGAR RAJAN

27. EXTENSION OF RANGE OF THE BLACK COBRA *NAJA NAJA OXIANA*

On 10 December 1990 at about 1000 hrs one of our bird trappers who was trapping raptors in the scrubland around the Dhandh, in Kutch district, Gujarat, rushed back to camp to inform us that a black cobra *Naja naja* had attacked another snake and was devouring it. We went to the site immediately but the cobra had already eaten the snake and withdrawn into a hole. On being disturbed, the cobra rushed out of its hole and regurgitated its freshly swallowed prey.

The cobra lacked the ocellations and was uniformly black. Its lack of patterns was clearly visible as it hissed violently and spread its hood. It soon disappeared into a nearby hole, leaving its regurgitated prey behind. We col-

lected the specimen and identified it as a saw scaled viper *Echis carinatus*. Its biometrics were as follows:

Total body length 780.5 mm; tail length 80 mm; weight 305 g.

According to Smith (FAUNA OF BRITISH INDIA, 1843) the black cobra occurs in Punjab and Kashmir. Whitaker (COMMON INDIAN SNAKES, 1978) mentions it as occurring in north-west India. The present record of the black cobra in Chhari Dhandh in Kutch extends the range of this subspecies.

November 16, 1990

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